

The South Danvers Observer

One South Danvers Family

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*"Long then will the
memory of Fitch Poole
be green among us. His
genial and gentle
character will never be
forgotten by his
contemporaries. And
when those who knew
him and feel his
influence shall have
passed away, his record
of kindness, and humor,
and honor, and
intellectual keenness,
will be remembered
with respect and
affection by all who
came within that circle
which his life has
irradiated and, over
which his death has
cast so deep a shadow."*

From the Peabody Press
August 20, 1873



Mary Ann Poor Poole (1806-1884)

Fitch Poole (1803-1873)

—The stories of Fitch and Mary Ann Poole are like many who lived in South Danvers during the 19th century.

They married young (at the ages of 21 and 18) and over the span of twenty-five years had nine children. Two daughters died in childhood: Elisabeth, at the age of three, and Sarah, when she was only seven months. Their remaining seven children, six sons and one daughter, lived to adulthood. However, by the time of Fitch Poole's death in 1873, three more of their children had died. Their first child, William, died of tuberculosis at the age of 21, Theodore sometime before the age of 30 and Francis just two years before his father at the age of 44.

As sad and—unfortunately—as commonplace as such events were in 19th century America, there was nothing commonplace about the Poole family.

Mary Ann Poor was born May 14, 1806, one of three children of Enoch and Sarah (Shillaber) Poor. Mary Ann had one brother, William, born in 1804 and one sister, Elizabeth born in 1810. Her father was involved in a variety of business ventures, mostly in the shipping industry. He bought part ownership in local vessels and also assisted in the probate of at least one local mariner. Though little is known about Mary Ann Poole, there can be no doubt that she had to have been more than a match for her multi-talented husband. While she assumed the role expected of women at that time, remaining in the background to support her husband, she managed a household that seldom included less than nine people.

While Fitch's business concerns centered around his tannery, his true interests were literary. From all accounts, his first poems, written in July 1822, were meant for a young girl named Mary Ann Poor. Fitch and

Mary Ann married in 1824, not long after Mary Ann's 18th birthday.

Fitch's accomplishments were many. They included his work as editor of two town newspapers, dozens of published poems, plays, satires and stories, as well his work as Librarian of the Peabody Institute. And though he seems to have passed on to all his children his business and scholarly interests, his artistic nature was shared mostly with his daughter Elizabeth. She became a watercolorist of some note and one of her sons, Frank Weston Benson, went on to become an important American artist.

Fitch and Mary Ann Poole's sons traveled as far as California and China. But no amount of distance kept them from emulating their father in their professions. Just as he did, they worked in newspapers, the leather industry, in insurance and banks.

Francis Poole, 1827-1871

—Francis Poole was the second of Mary Ann and Fitch Poole's nine children. Born a little over two years after his brother William, he was old enough to witness the deaths of his sisters Elisabeth in 1832 and Sarah in 1835. But many happy years followed with the births of Theodore, Horace, Elizabeth, Arthur and Edmund.

Fitch and Mary Ann were devoted parents, as Fitch recorded in the diary he kept between 1849 and 1870. While Mary was busy caring for the household, Fitch often used his free moments to build panoramas for his children or help them with various projects.

The first public mention of Frank, as his family called him, came in 1841. Having overheard a commotion when two small boys fell into a salt marsh adjoining the North River which then flowed into downtown South Danvers, Frank didn't hesitate. He jumped in and pulled both boys out, 5 year old Rollins Merrill and 8 year old Caleb Frost. Only young Caleb survived.

The *Salem Gazette* proclaimed that "his [Frank's] promptness, perseverance and good judgment were far beyond his years. Few men would have done so well." Such words might have eased some of Frank's grief, but the ordeal in which one little boy died must have remained with him for a long time.

A few years later, in 1849, gold fever swept through the country. Like so many from Massachusetts, including his uncle Leonard and several others from South Danvers, Frank decided to head west. There were only two ways to California in

Advertisement for the Ship that took Frank Poole to California

From MaritimeHeritage.org

1849: by land, which entailed the all too real possibility of Indian attacks, or by water. This meant a dangerous and often life-threatening journey through the Strait of Magellan, between the southern tip of South America and Antarctica.

On Nov. 12, 1849, Frank departed on the Schooner *Civilian* for California. Fitch recorded in his diary on that November day that "*Frank bade us good bye and went to Boston. . . . Farewell my son and may blessings attend thee!*"

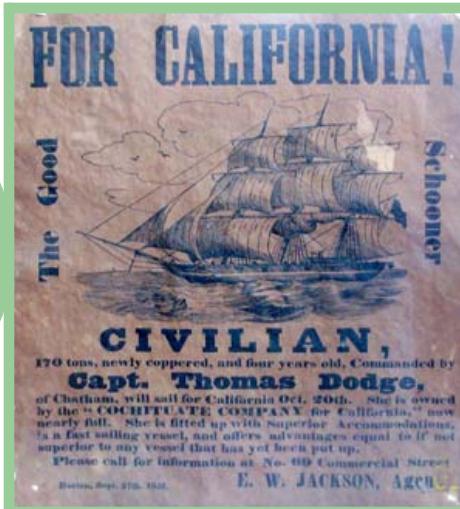
The *Civilian* would make record time, arriving in San Francisco in mid-April 1850, only 143 days after its departure from Boston. Most other ships at the time took over 200 days.

Whatever Frank found in California didn't hold him long. In a few months, he was back home. After Frank's return, the restlessness that sent him seeking for gold led him through a variety of careers. He studied law under Judge Otis Lord of Salem, studied natural history, was a farmer before the Civil War, and later worked as a printer for the Peabody Press.

Frank Poole died unexpectedly on February 8, 1871. According to the Feb. 15, 1871 *Peabody Press* "The deceased was a man of fine talents and irreproachable character, and it may be truly said of him, that he had not an enemy in the world. A quiet, genial and refined companion, he possessed the love and respect of all who knew him."

On Saturday afternoon, while several small boys were playing on the marsh in Danvers, opposite Harmony Grove, this lad [Rollins W. Merrill, age 5] slipped off the bank where the water was over his head. A son of Mr. Caleb L. Frost, aged 8 years, ran to his assistance, and also disappeared. . . . Francis Poole, aged about 14. . . immediately ran and plunged in where he saw their caps on the water, and soon his feet came in contact with one whom he brought out and found to be Frost. He then plunged in again, and persevered until he found the other. Both of them were apparently lifeless when taken from the water. The most assiduous efforts were made for their recovery, and on Frost proved successful, but Merrill could not be resuscitated. . . ."

*From the Salem Gazette
September 9, 1841*



Horace Poole, 1836-1916

—Horace Poole was born a year after the death of his sister Sarah. At the time of Horace's birth, his brother William had just turned 13, Francis was 10 and Theodore was 5. No doubt, Horace's childhood was as normal as any South Danvers boy in the 1840s. In his diary, Fitch speaks of helping Horace build a coop for his chickens, of Horace going "maying" with his younger sister Lizzy and of his bobbing for eels with his brother Theodore.

On October 12, 1849, two months before Horace turned 12, Fitch reported that "Horace [went] to N. Danvers with his Engine Co., in uniform." It seems that like some of the junior companies that were organized a decade later for boys during the Civil War, the South Danvers Fire Department also had a junior Engine company for those boys who hoped to someday volunteer for the Fire Department.

Horace's interest in civic duty must have come not just from his father, but also from his uncles and brothers. His uncle Charles had attended West Point and his brother Theodore had applied for an appointment to West Point, but was denied.

Horace was accepted into the first class in the newly formed High School in 1850. After completing his studies here, he attended

Kimball Union Academy in Meriden, N. H.

Upon graduating, Horace outdid his brother Frank by sailing to China to learn navigation. He returned home in 1857 but his travels weren't over. Perhaps he heard the stories about his fellow townsman, Grenville Dodge, settling in Iowa in the early 1850s to help survey the state for the coming railroad. Or perhaps he found the potential of life on the frontier exciting. Whatever the reason, in 1858, Horace headed west.

He chose a good time to settle in Iowa. It was a young state, with much promise for an ambitious young man. Just thirty years before, after the government had forced the relocation of most of the Indian tribes, the first white settlement had been organized in the territory. However, those first settlers encountered a vastly different terrain from the what they were used to, one that many found almost impossible to endure. Because there were no trees, sod homes were the norm. In drought, fire swept through the prairies, destroying everything in its path. And malaria was rampant.

Once Iowa was accepted into the union in 1846, more and more people headed west, hoping for fresh opportunities in a frontier state. Not long after Horace Poole

arrived, he set to work at once as a bookkeeper for a commission house, Smith & Cannon. Dubuque's location on the Mississippi as well as its closeness to Wisconsin encouraged the logging and boat building industries to boom. It was the perfect place for such a firm to prosper.

Those years must have been an exciting time for Horace. The 1860 census taken in Dubuque lists many transplants from the eastern United States, but nearly a third of the residents were immigrants from as far away as Panama, Iceland, Holland, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Austria.

When the Civil War began, Horace enlisted with the 1st Iowa regiment, also known as the Governor's Greys. Horace's letters to his parents were among the earliest Army correspondence published in his father's paper, *The South Danvers Wizard*. These letters gave the readers a window into the war out west. The first eyewitness account of any battle published in the *Wizard* came from Horace. His report on the Battle of Wilson's Creek appeared the August 28th, 1861 edition of the *Wizard*. Though he stated incorrectly that it was a Union victory, it is possible that Horace merely repeated what his superiors told the troops.

After his initial three month service ended, Horace re-enlisted in the 21st Iowa Infantry as a lieutenant and quickly rose to become Adjutant to General FitzHenry Warren.

In 1864, Horace returned to South Danvers to marry Frances Forrest Langworthy, an Iowan native. After the war, they lived in Dubuque, where they had two sons, Clark, born in 1868 and Horace, born in 1879.

Horace worked as a bookkeeper, owned a wholesale grocery business—Poole, Gilliam & Co.—and later served as a U.S. Marshall for northern Iowa. He died in Feb. 16, 1916 and was followed by his wife Frances nine months later on November 10th, 1916.

Horace Poole's gravestone
Linwood Cemetery, Dubuque, Iowa
From the Iowa Gravestone
Photo Project



Poole Family Genealogy (Abbreviated)

William Pool (1730?-1776) of Reading

Married 1st Mary _____ (1730-1760)

Their children:

1. Mary (1753-)

2 William (1756-1775)

Married 2nd. Elizabeth _____ (d. 1806)

Their children:

III. Ward (1763-)

4. Zachariah (1765-1807)

5. Nathaniel (1766-1790) Died at sea.

6. Elisabeth (1770-1827)

VII. Fitch (1773-1837)

8. Rebekah (1774-1785)

III. Ward Pool (1763-) m. 1st Sarah Perry (1771-1796)

Their children:

9. William (1794-)

10. Joseph Perry (1795-1796) m. Rebecca Seccomb

Their children:

11. Joseph (1797-1798)

XII. Ward (1799-1819)

13. Rebekah (1800-)

VII. Fitch Pool (1773-1837) m. Eliza Cutler

Their children:

XIV Fitch (1803-1873)

15. Eliza Cutler (1805-

XVI. Leonard (1807-1859)

17. Maria (1808-1810)

18. Sally Perry (1810-

19. Edward (1812-1847)

20. Horace (1815-1838)

21. Rebecca (1818-

22. Samuel Augustus (1820-

23 Maria (1823-1868)

24. Charles Henry (1825-1876)

XII. Ward Poole (1799-1819) m. Eliza Wilder (1801-1861?)

Their children:

25. Joshua Hall (1819-)

XXVI William Frederick (1821-1894)

27. Henry Ward (1825-)

28. Lucius (1833-)

29 Eliza Wilder (1835-

30. George Sanger (1839-)

31 Joseph Converse (1844-1845)

XIV Fitch (1803-1873) m. 1824 Mary Ann Poor (1806-1884)

Their children:

31. William (1824-1846)

32. Francis (1827-1871)

32. Elisabeth (1829-1832)

33. Theodore (1832-c. 1858) m. Maria Boyden

35. Sarah (1835-1835)

36. Horace (1836-1916) m. Frances Forrest Langworthy

37. Elizabeth Frost (1839-1899) m. George W. Benson

38. Arthur Fitch (1844-1927) m. Martha F. West

39. Edmund Alden (1849-1909) m. Laura Anna Mackintosh

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